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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TALLINN 000228

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [EN](#)
SUBJECT: ESTONIA/IRAQ: TIMING FOR POST-UNSCR ARRANGEMENTS

Classified by: CDA KAREN DECKER for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

REF: (A) STATE 60836
(B) TALLINN 102
(C) TALLINN IIR 6 954 0060 08

(U) This is an action recommendation -- please see para 7.

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Estonia's mandate to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom, currently predicated on UNSCR 1151, will expire at the end of 2008. The Estonian parliament will be required to vote on a recommendation from the government to extend the mandate and thereby the deployment. The Iraq mission is a sensitive and controversial matter in Estonia, and its extension -- absent a new UNSCR -- will be politically difficult to achieve. The Estonians are, therefore, watching carefully to see how U.S.-Iraqi SOFA negotiations proceed.

¶2. (S) SUMMARY CON'T: Even before Ref A, post had begun to explore with Estonian officials how they planned to renew the mission in Iraq. It is clear already that Estonia will benefit from more direct input from Washington to facilitate successful mandate renewal. As a first step, to lay the groundwork for technical, legal and political discussions, GOE officials have told us they will need a direct request from the Government of Iraq to extend the Estonian mandate. In addition, the GOE is requesting more detailed information on the U.S.-Iraq SOFA. We believe an inter-agency visit in August to brief the GOE on the SOFA will serve to both inform key Estonians on the issue and to focus them on a workable action plan. END SUMMARY.

SOFA CLARITY: ESTONIANS ASKING EARLY AND OFTEN

¶3. (S) The Iraq SOFA and its implications for Estonian participation in coalition operations in Iraq has already been raised at high levels in the U.S. (Estonian President Ilves to the Vice President in late April) and on numerous occasions here in Estonia among Embassy staff and senior Estonian officials. Most recently, Poloff and Army Attache met with Arti Hilpus, Division Director for Security Policy at the Estonian MFA and Jaano Vija, Chief Expert from the International Operations Section of the MOD. Hilpus told us the Government will begin discussions on renewal of the Iraq mandate for 2009 in early September, and "will take at least three months" to develop their position. MOD and MFA share the lead in drafting the mandate legislation. Their final draft must be agreed by the Cabinet and then submitted to the Parliament for approval (in December).

¶4. (S) Hilpus emphasized that the safest path to a renewal of the mandate would be to demonstrate that the U.S. and Estonia were in lockstep. As much as possible, the U.S. should provide detailed information on the SOFA and how it may be extended to coalition partners. (Note: Hilpus is unsure what process would be required to approve a decision for Estonia to "opt in" to a U.S.-Iraq SOFA. He

suggested that it may be possible to do so without Parliamentary approval, if the SOFA does not include any reference to financial obligations. End Note.) Hilpus strongly recommended the U.S. provide such clarity by mid-August to give the MFA and MOD time to prep the formal discussions in September within the Government. Charge has heard the same request from MOD Permanent Under Secretary Lauri Almann.

GETTING AN IRAQI REQUEST -- FOREIGN MINISTER TO BAGHDAD

15. (S) Hilpus emphasized the important role the UNSCR has played in providing the basis for previous mandate renewals in Estonia. In the absence of a new UNSCR in December, Hilpus said, a direct request from the Government of Iraq (GOI) for Estonia to extend its mandate would be essential to establish the legal basis necessary for the continued deployment of Estonian troops to Iraq.

16. (S) Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, accompanied by Hilpus, is planning to visit Baghdad in August. (The GOE is currently awaiting final authorization from the Government of Iraq before making transport arrangements with USCENTCOM.) We would like to work closely with the MFA to shape the FM's visit so that it includes time to nail down the request from the Government of Iraq for Estonia to continue its mission.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION: A ROADSHOW

17. (S) We would find it hard to believe that Estonia is alone in its
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thirst for information about next steps in Iraq. We therefore propose Washington consider a "road show" to key capitals this summer and fall to break down the SOFA implications for coalition partners and help shape their decision-making process. We would see two aspects to such a show.

-- in August, a working-level delegation to discuss technical and legal aspects of the SOFA and how coalition partners could benefit as third parties. We would envision this to be a joint State-Pentagon group.

-- in October, a higher-level roadshow (DAS or above) to work parliament and public opinion. Neither visit would need to be long, but would serve to emphasize the importance we place on the Estonian contribution.

18. (C) An additional potential force multiplier (especially in influencing public opinion) would be to have a CODEL stop in Tallinn on its way back from Iraq to share its findings with government officials, parliamentarians and the media. Estonians are eager for first- and second-hand accounts of progress, and unfortunately, their access is limited.

19. (S) For our part, we will work the Foreign Minister's upcoming trip to Baghdad as a natural time and place to nail down whether Iraq wants Estonia to continue to participate. We will continue to press MFA and MOD contacts to work their own inter-agency process and their parliamentarians to lay the groundwork for an informed debate in the fall. We will work Parliament ourselves as well.

110. (S) COMMENT: Without doubt, we are asking a lot of Washington offices overburdened with urgent priorities. We firmly believe, however, that maintaining the international nature of the coalition in Iraq is important, both for the future of the Iraqi people and the strengthening of the transatlantic relationship. END COMMENT AND ACTION RECOMMENDATION.

DECKER